

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 619

By Crowe

A RESOLUTION to urge the Commissioner of the Department of Health to designate Alzheimer's disease and other related dementias as a public health issue.

WHEREAS, it is the intent of this General Assembly to increase awareness of Alzheimer's disease and other related dementias, address cognitive impairment, promote brain health, and meet the needs of caregivers; and

WHEREAS, Alzheimer's disease has been traditionally seen as an aging issue, but Alzheimer's is a public health issue, because the burden to society is large, the impact is major, and there are ways to intervene; and

WHEREAS, Alzheimer's disease, which currently has no cure, is the sixth leading cause of death in adults aged eighteen or older in the United States of America and Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, while there are promising prevention interventions, including physical exercise, dietary considerations, cognitive exercise, and social engagement, there are currently no known definitive interventions to prevent Alzheimer's disease; therefore, essential public health services of early detection, risk reduction, and surveillance are necessary to protect and improve the health at a population level; and

WHEREAS, in conjunction with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Tennessee Department of Health annually conducts the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey to gather statewide public health data; and

WHEREAS, in the 2016 BRFSS survey, 13.8 percent – or one in eight – Tennesseans aged forty-five and older reported an increase in confusion or worsening memory loss and almost half of them (46.1 percent) had not discussed these cognitive concerns with a healthcare provider; and

WHEREAS, caregiving for individuals with Alzheimer's disease often takes an enormous toll on family members; creating opportunities to reduce stress, depression, injuries, anxiety, isolation, and other health issues that caregivers of people with Alzheimer's often face is important; and

WHEREAS, the onset of Alzheimer's disease cannot yet be stopped or reversed; early detection and diagnosis allows people with dementia and their families a better chance of receiving and benefiting from treatment, care, support services, and more time to put legal, financial, and advance directives in place for the future; and

WHEREAS, we recognize the important responsibility the Tennessee Department of Health and the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability have in promoting and encouraging healthy behaviors among the general public, increasing early detection and diagnosis of disease and disability, reducing risk of future illness and injury, educating the healthcare workforce, and monitoring the health of the State and commend these agencies for the efforts that have already been put forth; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we urge the Commissioner of the Department of Health to designate Alzheimer's disease and other related dementias as a public health issue.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Commissioner of the Department of Health.